

Recorded Crime in Scotland

Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual statistical bulletin providing information on crimes and offences recorded and cleared up by the police in Scotland. • The bulletin is part of a series of statistical bulletins produced by the Scottish Government on the criminal justice system.
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly data returns are electronically submitted by Police Scotland, containing a simple count of the numbers of crimes and offences, for each local authority, which the police have recorded and cleared up.
Concepts and Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contraventions of Scottish criminal law are divided for statistical purposes into crimes and offences. "Crime" is <i>generally</i> used for the more serious criminal acts. The distinction is made only for statistical reporting purposes and has no impact on how the police investigate reports of criminal activity. The "seriousness" of the offence is <i>generally</i> related to the maximum sentence that can be imposed. This distinction has been consistently used in the Recorded Crime in Scotland bulletin since publication began in 1983 and, prior to this, in the Criminal statistics publications dating back to the 1920s. A further distinction, although not absolute, is that the numbers of offences recorded by the police generally tends to be affected more by police activity and operational decisions than the number of crimes. The detailed classification of crimes and offences used by the Scottish Government to collect criminal statistics contains about 475 codes. • The statistical return from which most of the figures in the Recorded Crime bulletin are taken is a simple count of the numbers of crimes and offences, for each local authority, which the police have recorded and cleared up. Only data from Police Scotland are included in the main findings and tables included in the bulletin. Returns of quarterly data, downloaded immediately following the financial year to which they relate, are submitted by Police Scotland and are used to produce a national total. • Additionally, data on the total number of crimes and offences recorded and cleared up by the British Transport Police and the Ministry of Defence Police in Scotland are included in Annex 1 of the bulletin. • Amendments, which arise after the end of the financial year (such as the deletion of incidents found on investigation not to be criminal), are not incorporated. For the first time, the Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2014-15 bulletin included analysis on the extent of revisions made to recorded crime data following its original submission to

	<p>Scottish Government statisticians by Police Scotland. This analysis confirmed that the extent of further amendment to police crime and offence records is <u>minimal</u> at the Scotland level – giving users confidence that the previously published statistics for 2013-14 provided a sufficiently accurate measure of police recorded crimes and offences. In light of this, the December 2015 meeting of the Scottish Crime Recording Board considered whether any amendment to the Official Statistics revisions policy should be made, and concluded that the current practice will continue, as simplicity, consistency in time series analysis and the ability to publish statistics promptly were the most important factors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The statistical bulletin is published annually. Each bulletin presents statistics in general for the most recent 10 year period and reports on a financial year basis. • The introduction of the Scottish Crime Recording Standard (SCRS) in 2004-05 has helped maintain a consistent approach to recording crime figures. As anticipated this has increased the numbers of minor crimes recorded by the police, such as minor crimes of vandalism and minor thefts. However, it was not anticipated that the SCRS would have a notable impact on the figures for more serious crimes such as serious assault, sexual assault, robbery or housebreaking. Unfortunately it was not possible to estimate the exact impact of the new recording standard on the recorded crime figures because around the time that the new standard was implemented, police also introduced centralised call centres which encouraged the reporting of incidents to the police. • The definition of “cleared up” is noted below. This definition came into force with effect from 1 April 1996. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>A crime or offence is regarded as cleared up where there exists a sufficiency of evidence under Scots law, to justify consideration of criminal proceedings notwithstanding that a report is not submitted to the procurator fiscal because either</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(i) by standing agreement with the procurator fiscal, the police warn the accused due to the minor nature of the offence, or</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(ii) reporting is inappropriate due to the non-age of the accused, death of the accused or other similar circumstances.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For some types of crime or offence the case is cleared up immediately because the offender is "caught in the act", e.g. motor vehicle offences. In
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	<p>Scots law, the confession of an accused person to a crime would not in general be sufficient to allow a prosecution to be taken, as corroborative evidence is required. Thus, a case cannot be regarded as "cleared up" on the basis of a confession alone. In some cases there is sufficient evidence but a prosecution cannot be brought, for example, because the accused has left the country. In such cases, the offender is said to have been traced and the crime is regarded as cleared up. The other terms in the definition describe the various actions that must be taken by the police against offenders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crimes or offences recorded by the police as cleared up in one financial year, year y, may have been committed and therefore recorded in a previous year, i.e. year y-1. This means that the number of crimes or offences cleared up are being expressed as a percentage of a different set of crimes or offences. This means that clear up rates in excess of 100% can arise in a given year. Clear up rates are calculated as follows: $\frac{\text{number of crimes cleared up in year y}}{\text{total number of crimes recorded in year y}} \times \frac{100}{1}$ Crimes and offences per 10,000 population rates are calculated as follows: $\frac{\text{total number of recorded crimes} \times 10,000}{\text{mid-year population estimate}} \times \frac{100}{1}$ When calculating the rates of crimes and offences per 10,000 population the relevant mid-year population estimates produced by the National Records of Scotland are used. The mid-year population estimates can be accessed here: http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/mid-year-population-estimates More detailed information on the concepts and definitions associated with this statistical bulletin are supplied within Annex 1 of the bulletin.
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary source of detailed and reliable information on recorded crimes and offences in Scotland. High-profile justice issue which shows levels of crime in Scotland. Informs the Scotland Performs National Outcome 9 – ‘we live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger’.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informs The Strategy for Justice in Scotland. • Attracts significant media and political interest, particularly in relation to violent crime, sexual crimes and crimes of handling offensive weapons. Data on violent crime and crimes of handling offensive weapons are regularly included in evidence accounts relating to knife crime. The data are also used in the Scottish Government's No Knives, Better Lives campaign. • Statistics on sexual crimes against children are regular supplied to children's charities such as the NSPPC and Children 1st. • The statistics are also used by a wide range of stakeholders to monitor trends, for policy research and development, and for research purposes. These include other Scottish Government Departments, such as Transport Scotland and the Directorate for Environment and Forestry, Local Authorities, the NHS, including ISD Scotland and Health Scotland, and the Office for National Statistics. • Recorded crime data are regular used by school pupils and both undergraduate and postgraduate students who are undertaking research on crime related topics. • There is considerable academic and parliamentary interest in the bulletin. • Recorded crime figures are annually supplied for inclusion in international compendiums, such as the Eurostat Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics and the United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.
Quality Assurance / Quality Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bulletin has been designated as Official Statistics and is quality assured to rigorous standards. • For further information about data quality, please refer to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annex 2 of the bulletin ▪ Sections 3 and 4 of the Recorded Crime in Scotland Framework of Assurance (http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubRecordedCrime/FoA) ▪ Section 9 of the User Guide which accompanies the statistics (http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubRecordedCrime/UserGuide)
Data Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is presented at a national (Scotland) level, with core tables provided at Local Authority level.
Disaggregation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime and offences data are broken down into the main seven crime groups, with further breakdowns of the groups provided. Number of crimes and offences as well as rates per 10,000 population are provided.
Timeliness of Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The statistical bulletin is generally published five months after the end of the financial year in question.

<p>Accuracy / Suitability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data provided by Police Scotland go through a process of quality assurance in which data received are checked across the four quarters of the financial year period, and against the previous year. Anything unusual or which we feel requires further explanation is then fed back to the Police for their attention. Any amendments are carried out and the final data is used to produce a set of data tables which can be used to check the final dataset. If the police are content that the figures are an accurate reflection of the dataset, then the data is officially signed off for use in the publication. • Bulletins are subjected to a secondary level of checking by statisticians who have not been involved in the production process.
<p>Comparability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparable time series data for total crimes and offences are available dating back to 1930 upon request. Additionally, from 1971 onwards further breakdowns of crimes and offences are available. Please note that due to local government reorganisation, data for 1975 are not available. • Comparable time series for crimes and offences cleared up are available from 1976 onwards. • The reporting year was changed from calendar to financial year, with the last reported calendar year being 1994 and the first reported financial year being 1995-96. • Information is electronically available via the Scottish Government's website dating back to 1988. • Long term, as well as short term, comparability of some crime groups over time will be affected due to changes in legislation. • An example of this is the introduction of the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009, which came into force on 1 December 2010. Further details regarding this can be found in the Note on comparability of Sexual crimes data. • Recorded crime statistics for England & Wales are not directly comparable with those in Scotland. The recorded crime statistics for Scotland are collected on the basis of the SCRS, which was introduced in 2004. Like its counterpart in England & Wales, it aims to give consistency in crime recording. • The main principles of the SCRS, with regard to when a crime should be recorded, are similar to the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) for England & Wales. However, there are various differences between the respective Counting Rules which specify different approaches for counting the number of crimes that should be recorded as a result of a single incident.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For instance, crimes recorded in England & Wales tend to be incident based, where the Principle Crime Rule states that if the sequence of crimes in an incident, or a complex crime, contains more than one type of crime, then the most serious crime should be counted. For example, an incident where an intruder breaks into a home and assaults the sole occupant would be recorded as two crimes in Scotland, while in England & Wales it would be recorded as one crime. • Differences in legislation and common law also have to be taken into account when comparing the crime statistics for England & Wales and Scotland. • Crime Statistics for England & Wales are published quarterly on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) website. The latest Crime Statistics for England & Wales can be accessed from the following link: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/index.html. • The legal system in Northern Ireland is based on that of England & Wales and the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) has the same notifiable offence list for recorded crime as used in England & Wales. In addition, the PSNI has adopted the NCRS and Home Office Counting Rules for recorded crime that applies in England & Wales. Thus, there are comparability considerations similar to those detailed above between recorded crime statistics for Northern Ireland and Scotland. • Crime statistics for Northern Ireland are collected and published separately. The latest Police Recorded Crime Statistics for Northern Ireland can be accessed from the following link: http://www.psni.police.uk/index/updates/updates_statistic_s.htm. • Further detail on the comparability of crime data can be found in the User Guide to Recorded Crime Statistics in Scotland, available from: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubRecordedCrime/UserGuide.
Caveats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The statistics contained in the Recorded Crime bulletin do not reveal the incidence of all crime committed. Not all incidents are reported to the police. The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) 2012-13 estimated that 39% of crimes, as defined by the SCJS, were reported to the police. • The two reasons most commonly given by victims for not reporting to the police were that the police would not have been able to do anything (37%) or that the incident was considered by them to be too trivial (36%).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many crimes or offences, for example, possession of drugs or speeding, have no victim other than perhaps the perpetrator and are discovered and recorded as a result of police activity rather than by being reported to the police by the public. Hence, the strength and deployment of the police mainly determine the numbers of such crimes or offences recorded. • In one criminal incident, several crimes or offences may occur - e.g. a house may be broken into and vandalised and the occupants assaulted. In this example, crimes of housebreaking (which would include the vandalism) and assaults would be recorded. In multiple offence incidents more than one offence may be counted rather than one for the incident as a whole; that is, the counting system is offence based rather than incident based. An offence may have more than one victim - for example in robberies - and be committed by more than one offender – e.g. some assaults and housebreakings (note that for murder, attempted murder and culpable homicide, the number of crimes recorded is equal to the number of victims). Thus the statistics in this bulletin are not directly comparable with statistics on action taken against offenders, as one offence may lead to several persons being charged. Equally, an offender may be charged with several offences. • More detailed information on the caveats associated with this statistical bulletin is supplied within the Data Considerations segments throughout Chapter 3 of the bulletin, and within Annex 1 and Annex 2 of the bulletin..
Links to Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual bulletins dating back to 1997 are available at: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubRecordedCrime
Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keith Paterson • Tel: 0131 244 5428 • E-mail: JusticeAnalysts@gov.scot